



THE EXAMINER



Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital, Twentynine Palms, California

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"Serving with Pride and Professionalism"

July 2003

One Tour as Enlisted, Another as Commissioned Officer

By Dan Barber, Public Affairs Officer
Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital

Some might ask, "Why would anyone want to come back to Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms (NHTP) for a second tour of duty after spending an initial four-year tour here?"

According to Lt. j.g. Joseph E. Plasse, he chose to return here because of the leadership opportunities available here. "At a small command, junior people have an opportunity to serve on committees or serve in collateral duties which demonstrate leadership that may only be available to more senior people at larger com-

Please see LTJG PLASSE on page 7



Lt.j.g. Joseph Plasse doing a rotation with the Surgical Services Department.

Highlights...

Seems most people want a tattoo at some point in their life, even if it's only a passing fancy. If you are considering a tattoo, here are some helpful hints for making sure you get a clean, safe tattoo. *page 2*

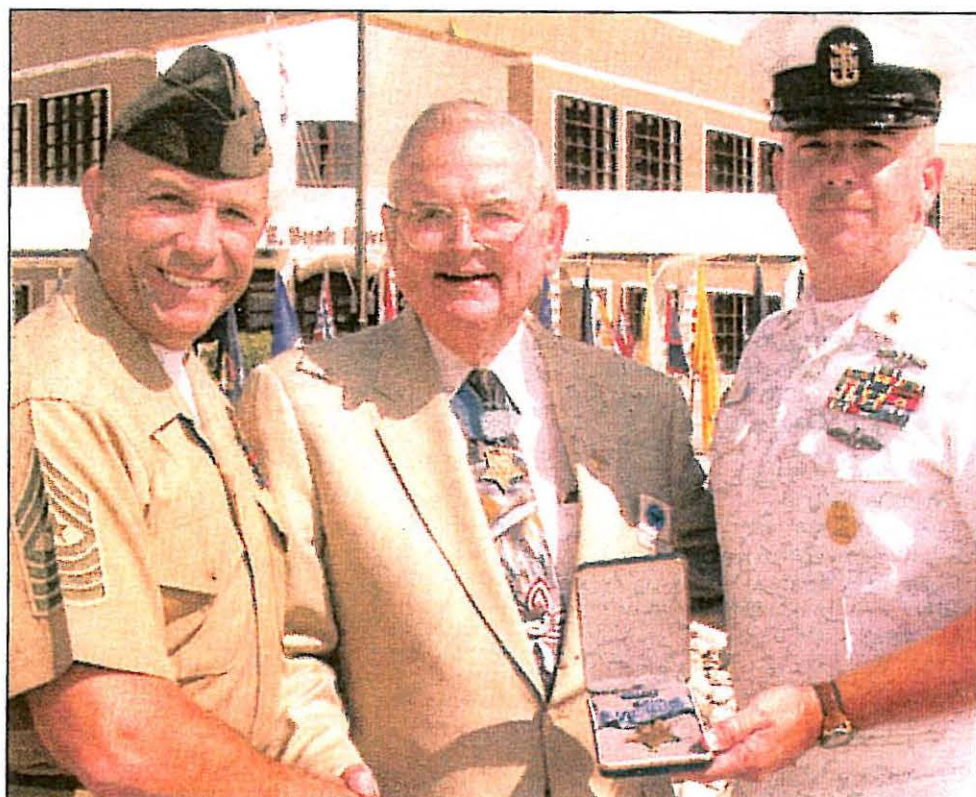
Marines and Sailors here at the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command (MAGTFTC) are constantly training or preparing to train for the ultimate job of being ready to protect the freedoms of the United States and its allies against many different enemies. *page 3*

Four Robert E. Bush Hospital staff attended the Navy Trauma Training Center (NTTC) in downtown Los Angeles recently. *page 5*

The Examiner can now be viewed online at: www.nhtp.med.navy.mil

For comments drop an e-mail to: d.barber@nhtp.med.navy.mil

Bush Dedicates Medal of Honor to Hospital...



Honoring the 105th anniversary of the Hospital Corps, Robert E. Bush, honorary Hospital Corpsman Master Chief, dedicates a duplicate of his Medal of Honor to the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital. Shown with the Medal are left to right, the Combat Centers Sergeant Major Steven L. Clarke, Robert E. Bush and the hospital's Command Master Chief Stephen R. Mitchell. "It's always a pleasure to visit and see the high quality of personnel and training Corpsmen receive on this base, said Bush.

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Here's To Your Health...

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Tattoo Safety

Martha Hunt, MA, Health Promotions Coordinator
Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital

Seems most people want a tattoo at some point in their life, even if it's only a passing fancy. If you are considering a tattoo, here are some helpful hints for making sure you get a clean, safe tattoo. When you find a tattoo artist, ask the following questions:

Does the Tattoo Artist:

- * Thoroughly wash their hands with antibacterial soap immediately before and after each tattoo?
- * Wear latex or nitrile gloves during the tattooing procedure?
- * Use single service materials and equipment (that means, each needle and tube set is individually packaged, dated, sealed, and autoclave sterilized)
- * Are the tattoo materials set up and opened in front of the client? New **STERILE** needles must always be removed from an autoclave bag in front of you. If not - **leave immediately!**
- * Have a FDA-regulated autoclave on site (a piece of medical equipment used to sterilize supplies)?
- * Clean their workspace with an EPA (Environmental Protection Agency)-approved antibacterial and anti-viral cleaner, before and after each client?
- * Thoroughly rinse the tube and needle set from the tattoo machine using an ultrasonic tank before discarding?
- * Properly dispose of contaminated materials in sharps containers and biohazard boxes?

Other questions to ask the tattoo artists include:

- * What training the artist has taken and completed. Are certificates available?
- * Is the artist vaccinated for Hepatitis B?

Always ask to see examples of the artist's finished work. A good tattoo artist will have photos openly available.

See how the person who you talk to answers your questions. Are they considerate and thorough, or are they annoyed by your questions? You have a right to have your questions answered thoroughly in advance. When you get there, check out the studio and make sure it looks and feels clean. If you get there and you're uncomfortable, you can leave.

What are the inks made of?

Tattoo ink is made from a variety of metal-based dyes that produce the distinctive colors (for example, red dyes are made from cinnabar). The inks used in tattoos and permanent makeup are not subject to FDA regulation like cosmetics and color additives are. Therefore, the FDA does not regulate the use of tattoo inks or pigments and does not control the actual practice of tattooing. Usually tattoo parlors are regulated by local laws and by local health departments.

What Risks Are Involved in Tattooing?

Infection. Tattooing equipment and needles that have not been properly sterilized can transmit infectious diseases such as Hepatitis or HIV. This risk of infection is the reason that the American Association of Blood Banks requires a one-year wait between getting a tattoo and donating blood. It is extremely important to make sure that all tattooing equipment is clean and sterilized before use. It is important to understand that in some cases the equipment that holds the needles cannot be sterilized reliably due to its design. No ointment, ink, water or other item should ever be returned to an open container after it has been removed for use as it may carry disease from one person to another. In addition, the person who receives a tattoo must be sure to care for the tattooed area properly during the first week or so after the tattoo to prevent infection.

Allergic reactions. Although allergic reactions to tattoo pigments are rare, when they happen they may be difficult because the pigments can be hard to remove. Occasionally, people may develop an allergic reaction to tattoos they have had for many years. In particular, the liquid that holds red and yellow inks has an increased chance of causing an allergy.

Granulomas. These are nodules that may form around material that the body sees as foreign, such as particles of tattoo pigment.

Keloid formation. If you are prone to developing keloids (scars that grow beyond normal

boundaries) you are at risk of keloid formation from a tattoo. However, keloids occur more frequently as a result of tattoo removal.

MRI complications. Sometimes people with tattoos or permanent makeup can experience swelling or burning in tattooed areas when they undergo a magnetic resonance imaging or MRI. This occurs only rarely and apparently without lasting effects. Tattoo pigments can also interfere with the quality of the MRI image.

Whatever the risks, you deserve to know up front if you can trust the tattoo artist and that they can ensure your safety. Ask questions of the tattoo artist and ask to see examples of their work.

Remember that the tattoo design is forever and you don't want a life threatening infection or an allergic reaction to go with it as well. Insist on sanitation and safety procedures! It's your right as a tattoo client and it is the artist's obligation as a professional to practice safe tattooing.

Upcoming Diabetes Class Schedule

The Internal Medicine Clinic of the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital offers a series of "Diabetes Self-Management Classes."

The schedule of classes is as follows:

Emotional Aspects of Diabetes. Video presentation, July 17, from 3 to 4 p.m.

All classes are held in the Family Practice Clinic Classroom 3.

Anyone with diabetes or interested in learning more about diabetes is welcome to attend. For more information call Lt. Julie Lundstad at 830-2175.

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The Examiner welcomes your comments and suggestions concerning the publication. Deadline for submission of articles is the 15th of each month for the following month's edition. Any format is welcome, however, the preferred method of submission is by e-mail or by computer disk.

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Kick the habit and learn to become tobacco free!

The Naval Hospital Health Promotions Program offers tobacco cessation classes. Classes are offered at two convenient times of noon and 5:30 p.m.

To sign up, call Health Promotions at 830-2814. The next set of tobacco cessation classes will start July 1. Call now before it all goes up in smoke!

Protect Yourself From Becoming a Heat Casualty

By Dan Barber, Public Affairs Officer
Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms

Marines and Sailors here at the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command (MAGTFTC) are constantly training or preparing to train for the ultimate job of being ready to protect the freedoms of the United States and its allies against many different enemies.

Part of that readiness is to be prepared in Force Protection. This means to keep the Marines and Sailors safe from terrorist attack and where the Naval Hospital is concerned health problems.

One of the hazards lurking here in the desert that could cause a great deal of harm is hot dry weather.

The summer season here and its time to renew efforts for people to avoid overdoing exercise or play in the Mojave. It's time to renew the awareness of the rules during Physical Training and Testing (PT).

Safety concerns with heat and PT are very real, especially in a desert environment. Dehydration is a constant threat when exercising in the heat. Since thirst occurs too late to be a good indicator of excessive water loss from the body, be sure to weigh yourself regularly during hot weather, especially if you're doing a lot of intense physical activity.

There is no specific temperature beyond which you should not exercise. People have become heat casualties even in subfreezing temperatures because they were overdressed. Any circumstances that cause your body's heat production to exceed its capability to cool off will often result in heat stress. In an effort to prevent serious illness and permanent physical damage most military installations have installed a Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) index. The WBGT index consists of a combination of readings from thermometers, providing temperatures for dry, humid and radiant heat.

These three temperatures are combined in a standard formula providing a more accurate

reading of heat stress intensity. The Quarterdeck of the Hospital can provide information on the WBGT index.

To alert members of hazardous weather conditions, the following flags are flown to indicate readings and control physical activity:

Green Flag – Unrestricted physical activity may be carried out.

Yellow Flag – Physical activity should be limited to those people who have been exercising in similar heat for a minimum of 10 days or more.

Red Flag – Physical activity is advised only for members who have been working out in similar heat conditions for a period of 12 weeks or more.

Black Flag – Vigorous outdoor exercise, regardless of conditioning or heat acclimatization, is not advisable.

Members should be advised to note the flag, which is flown at the headquarters building before beginning outdoor workouts in the summer months. When exercising in the sun, try to wear light (color and weight) clothing. The lighter colors will reflect the sun's rays and the lighter weight will allow for more rapid evaporation. Try to exercise during the coolest parts of the day (early morning or late evening). Also reduce the intensity of your exercise to decrease the heat stress on your body and drink plenty of water.

Although you do not have a choice about the characteristics of work clothing or gear, do not use a vapor barrier (rubber) suit as an aide for weight reduction while exercising. Exercising in a rubberized suit may result in severe dehydration and elevate your core body temperature. Wearing these suits also will not help you with your weight reduction program since the decrease in weight is due to a very temporary loss of fluid, not fat loss.

Yet another problem to look at is the consumption of cold medications, diet pills, decongestants, antihistamines or receiving immunizations. These types of medications compromise the body's ability to regulate heat. Members taking any of these types of medications should take extra precautions during the summer heat... Everyone should be aware of their environment... especially the unforgiving environment of the desert.

Patient Safety...

Half Way Through the Year

By Lt. Daniel Anthony—Risk Management Advisory Committee
Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital

As we move into the warm summer months and 2003 is half over, we are also concluding our six-month presentation of the National Patient Safety Goals with goal number six: Improve the effectiveness of clinical alarm systems. As we have discussed previously, it is not enough to provide direct patient care in a safe manner, but also, to ensure that the environment in which that care is rendered remains clean, safe, and well monitored.

Under the supervision of several departments including the hospital safety office, biomedical repair, and the operating management department, routine testing of alarms is conducted throughout the facility and discrepancies are noted and corrected. Equipment used in patient care areas also receives scheduled maintenance to ensure that alarms are functioning properly. Alarms are set to activate within pre-determined set points and to be loud enough to alert staff over competing noise.

In this respect, our patients can expect to be just as safe sitting in the pharmacy waiting room, passing through the quarterdeck, or visiting surgical services as when they are admitted to the unit. Our staff trains regularly on carrying out immediate actions for emergencies and those actions always focus on *patient safety first*.

These six safety goals have addressed a variety of safety initiatives. To summarize, we started with the simplest issue—correct patient identification. We concurrently addressed improvement in communication among caregivers and improved the safety of our high-alert medications. Further efforts lead to the development of a preoperative verification process that involved the patient in confirming patient, site and procedure to be performed. The fifth safety goal dealt with the use of medication infusion devices to prevent excess medication administration due to mechanical failure of pump systems. Finally, we have addressed the hospital environment as a whole in which the first five safety goals are carried out.

This last patient safety goal completes a six-point program to bring all hospitals up to national patient safety standards. Our commitment does not end here. The Patient Safety Team regularly meets and discusses current and new initiatives to keep our hospital the safest and best place to receive medical care.

BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT GROUP

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WHAT BETTER WAY TO FIND OUT ABOUT:

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- * Milk Collection & Storage
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LOCATION, DATE & TIME:

Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms
Classroom 3 (behind Family Practice Clinic)
Every Monday 10 a.m. -noon
Breast Education Center 830-2501

Hard Chargers...



HN Jamieson Balitaan receives his Honorary Desert Rat Certificate from Captain Lynda Salmond, Commanding Officer, Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital.



Cindy Coe receives her Honorary Desert Rat Certificate from Capt. Salmond.



HM3 Philip Keehn receives a Good Conduct Medal from Capt. Salmond.



Captain Pamela Murphy receives a Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal from Capt. Salmond.



Lt. Michael Carr, a Pediatrician at the hospital, receives a Marine Corps Achievement Medal from Capt. Salmond.



Lt. Ronald Cleveland of the hospital's Emergency Medicine Department receives new shoulder boards during his recent promotion ceremony.



Captain Salmond presents the Trophy to the Hospital's Golf Team, Capt. Fogelson and HMC Levy M.



Cmdr. John Locke, Orthopedic Surgeon in the hospital, receives congratulations at his recent promotion ceremony.



HM2 Erika Aspgren receives a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal from Capt. Salmond.



receives a Navy and
Salmond.



The Command Master Chief, HMCN (SS/SW/FMF) Stephen Michell, far right, presents the newest batch of frockees at a recent ceremony held at the hospital.



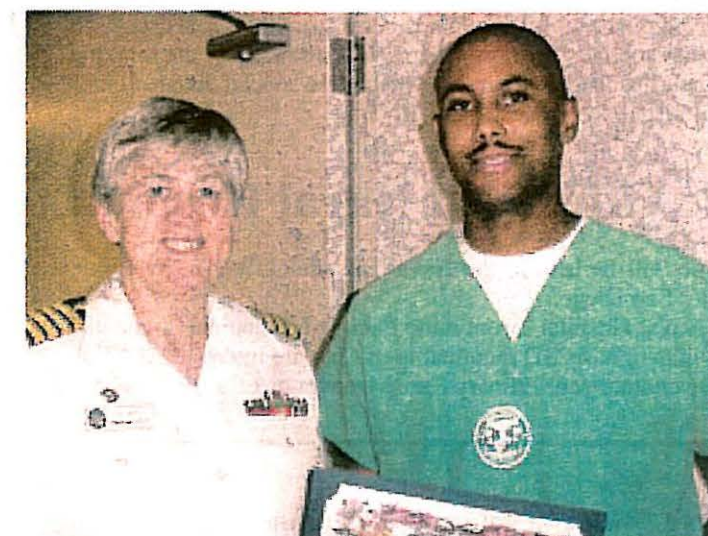
Second Place Commanding General's Intramural Golf Tournament
from left to right, Capt. Alan Rowley, Lt. Cmdr. Marc
it.



HN Andre Cary receives a Good Conduct Medal from
Capt. Salmond.



HM3 Christopher Valentin receives a Good Conduct Medal
from Capt. Salmond.



HM3 Richard Burrell receives his Honorary Desert Rat
Certificate from Capt. Salmond.



HN Christina Castaneda receives a Good Conduct
Medal from Capt. Salmond.



Lt. Cmdr. Maria Young receives a Navy and Marine Corps
Commendation Medal from Capt. Salmond.

For More Hard Chargers, see page 8

Hospital Staff Experience Big City Trauma

By Lt. Jonathan S. Edwards, NC, Emergency Medicine Department
Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital

Four Robert E. Bush Hospital staff attended the Navy Trauma Training Center (NTTC) in downtown Los Angeles recently. NTTC occupies a small part of the massive Los Angeles County-University of Southern California Medical Center (LAC+USC). NTTC is a program developed to train Navy doctors, nurses, and hospital corpsmen the fundamental skills necessary to care for patients who may sustain traumatic injuries in combat. Previous graduates have served in Fleet Surgical Teams and Shock Trauma Platoons during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Navy Nurse Corps Lieutenant Commander Susan Union, Lieutenants Jonathan Edwards and Sithisak Sutsakhan joined Hospital Corpsman Third Class Philip Keehn in the first class to graduate from NTTC and not get immediately deployed.

Instead the four brought their skills and knowledge back to the Emergency Department to better serve their patients. Trauma patients from the base's Combined Arms Exercises (CAX) come to the base hospital by military air and ground transport. Even the worse cases come to the Emergency Department for stabilization before air transport to a trauma center. The type of injury, and age of the patient determine where they are transported. Some patients may go 70 miles to Desert Regional Medical Center in Palm Springs, which is the closest trauma center. A serious burn patient may have to travel over 120 miles away to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton. It was important to the staff to receive trauma training to prepare them to stabilize the patient for the long transport.

The crew from Twentynine Palms cared for over 150 trauma patients with injuries similar to those from combat: gun shot and stab wounds, and serious full-thickness burns. Patients were followed from the Emergency Department Trauma Bay through the Operating Room and on to the Intensive Care Unit. With over 1,500 procedures performed on these patients, Navy staff assisted with massive blood transfusions and open chest heart massage, a few of the more unique experiences available at LAC+USC.

The Twentynine Palms crew realized that many of these invasive procedures cannot be performed at a small rural hospital, but many smaller procedures honed by the Navy staff could stabilize a trauma patient for transfer. Hopefully many of the procedures learned will never be used if trauma is prevented at CAX. But if does, NTTC training helps Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital fulfill its commitment to care for those who serve!



Local Organization Supports New Parents with a Personal Touch



The Naval Hospital Maternity Department recently received some inspiring contributions of support from the Peace Lutheran Church Woman's Group out of Palm Desert. Dolores Rayburn, the Group's president, and Laurene Burns gave numerous handmade blankets, crocheted hats and distributed a number of layette packages for new mothers who recently have given birth and whom have spouses serving in the military.

According to Rayburn, "The group typically has made these items for religious missions overseas, but the desire to show support to the local military community during this difficult time shifted the group's focus. Lieutenant Commander Meggan McGraw, the unit's nurse manager, graciously received the beautiful handmade items from this local group. "It is such an inspiration for these new mothers to know others in the community are thinking about them, their families and their husbands' safe return when these special donated items are presented to them after their birth experiences", said McGraw.

Specialty Clinic Offered at Naval Hospital

Rheumatology Specialty Clinic will be held at the Naval Hospital July 7-8, by Cmdr. Weis from Naval Medical Center San Diego.

If you have been referred by Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms to a rheumatologist and are currently under care of a civilian or NMCSD rheumatologist, but are interested in being seen at the Naval Hospital please contact your Primary Care Manager or Lt. Julie Lundstad at 830-2175.

Life's Lesson...

You know you're getting old when you get cable TV for the weather channel.



LT.J.G. PLASSE...

Continued from page 1

mands," said Plasse. "When selection boards look at you, they are looking for leadership potential, and the opportunity to display leadership for junior personnel is greater at a smaller command than it is at a larger command," he added.

"Coming back to Twentynine Palms was an easy choice. My detailer faxed me a copy of available duty stations," said Plasse. "Twentynine Palms was on the list" "Unlike a Nurse straight out of nursing school they are given a choice of three geographic locations and normally they will go to a large hospital for their first tour. But for prior Hospital Corpsmen, it is wide open for us. I literally had every shore command in the world to pick from and I chose to return here."

"I also opted to return to Twentynine Palms because it has a small town atmosphere, plus it is close to my family, and when I was enlisted here I had a very successful tour. I believe that I can grow professionally as a Registered Nurse and officer during this second tour of duty," said Plasse.

"This command is good for enlisted troops because we have a junior college close by and the command encourages on the job training and offers many in-house programs for professional development," said Plasse. "If our junior troops just put their noses to the grindstone and work hard they can become very successful in whatever endeavors they might pursue," he added. "To become successful, all someone should think about is what they want for the future, then develop a plan for what they want, and then pursue that plan," said Plasse. A majority of officers assigned to Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms are prior enlisted.

Plasse originally came to Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms in July 1991 as a Hospital Corpsman and worked as an OR Tech after graduating from boot camp, Hospital Corps

School, and OR Tech School. He was promoted to 3rd class petty officer in June 1992. He worked at the old hospital until 1993 when the doors to our current facility opened in July 1993. Following his tour at NHTP, he was transferred to U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka, Japan where he worked as an OR Tech, until his selection to the Medical Enlisted Commissioning Program (MECP). He then went on to Nursing school at Florida State University at Tallahassee, Florida, where he made the Dean's List all three years of school and served as his Nursing School Class President for two of those years.

"The hardest thing that I've found in my transition from the enlisted ranks to the officer ranks is learning to delegate. I went from being a doer to being an educator and mentor. When I was enlisted, I just did what needed to be done. I now have to direct our Corpsmen to do those things. But when I do direct them, I like to explain to them why it is important for them to do it right... delegation of duties with education," said Plasse.

Plasse has offered to help mentor any enlisted staff member willing to work hard and who wishes to seriously pursue the MECP. Since Plasse was picked for the program he has assisted six others in getting accepted to the MECP, including guidance in putting together their application package. The last person Plasse helped was Petty Officer Bueno, who worked in the Surgical Services Department here, before he left for Nursing School. "The application package is very important, because the Navy is looking for people who will be leaders," said Plasse.

Plasse picked the Navy because his father was an 18 year Navy Veteran, who was medically retired. "The Navy is in my blood. There is a history with the Navy in my family that goes back several generations... that's probably why I originally chose to join," said Plasse.

"However, the Navy really wasn't my first choice right out of high school," said Plasse. "I was interested in going to college to study graphic arts and was also interested in working in the Sheriff's Department, but life events kind of caught up with me. The crowd I was hanging around with at the time wasn't the best influence on me and I was afraid I would eventually get into trouble if I stayed in the area. On a Saturday morning I talked to a recruiter and told him I wanted to take my Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test (ASVAB) on Monday and by Friday of that week I was on my way to boot camp."

Plasse considers Valencia, Calif., as his hometown. He graduated from Saugus High School in 1988, where he participated on his Varsity Cross Country and Track teams.

Plasse married his former high school classmate, Lisa Molina. Together they have one son, Joseph Scott, aged 9.

Plasse enjoys woodworking and family activities in his spare time. Plasse's future plans for the Navy is to get back in the OR. "I have 12 years of experience in the OR with 13 years in the Navy. I hope to become a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist," he said.

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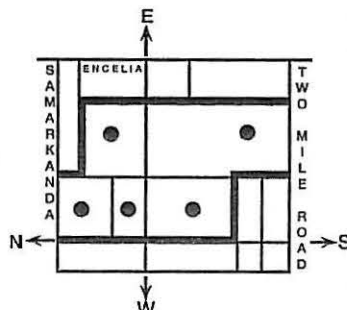
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**Every Thursday in the Mental Health Clinic
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For more information call 830-2584 or 830-2935

More Hard Chargers...



HN Monica Murphy receives a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal from Capt. Salmond.



Lt. Jose Dominguez receives a Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal from Capt. Salmond.



MS1 Cesar Caldejon receives a Gold Star in Lieu of his fifth Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal from Capt. Salmond.



Lt. Cmdr. Susan Union of the hospital's Emergency Medicine Department receives new shoulder boards at her recent promotion ceremony.



MS3 Harold Gallagher takes the oath of reenlistment at a recent ceremony.



Lt. Nicolas Arretche receives a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal from Capt. Salmond.



Lt. Sithisak Sutsakhan receives his Honorary Desert Rat Certificate from Capt. Salmond.



MS2 Gregory Guitapp receives a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal from Capt. Salmond.



Captain Salmond presents the 3rd Place Commanding General's Trophy to **HMCM Stephen Mitchell**, and **HM3 Christina Cotton**, representing the hospital's Volley Ball Team.